Keeping in Touch

News and notes from
the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

June 1994

Rev. John Fowler, right, and Mr. Ravi Verma visited the food court of the Sydney Convention Centre to plan for the 1997 General Conference. *(See story on page 2.)*

STONEWALL 25
Support Grows for God-Box Event

More than a dozen lesbian and gay groups representing the full range of Christian traditions — Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox — have joined UFMCC as official co-sponsors of Hands Around the God-Box.

At noon on Friday, June 24, 1994, hundreds of gay and lesbian Christians and their friends will gather at New York City's Interchurch Center for "Hands Around the God-Box" — a peaceful demonstration to condemn the continuing exclusion of lesbian and gay people from full participation in the life of the nation's churches.

Held in conjunction with Stonewall 25, the gathering will begin with a short worship service outside the Interchurch Center's main entrance at 475 Riverside Drive, four blocks north of columbia University in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Chief Ecumencial Officer of the UFMCC, will deliver a brief sermon.

After prayer, music, and a call to action, participants will form a human chain around the building, commonly nicknamed the "God-Box" because of its harshly angular shape and occupancy by religious organizations.

(see God-Box, page 4)

UFMCC Marches, Celebrates

UFMCC will worship and march together during Stonewall 25: The International March on the United Nations to Affirm the Human Rights of Lesbian and Gay People.

Rev. Troy Perry will speak at "Celebrating Stonewall 25: A Generation of Faith" at 7:30 p.m. Sat., June 25, in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall.

Admission is free, and seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Members of UFMCC will march together, Sun., June 26. The meeting location for the UFMCC contingent was not available at press time. Information will be available from UFMCC Headquarters, (213) 464-5100. ❐

Conference to Reimagine God

Three presentation groups will explore ways to re-imagine God, church growth and power at the UFMCC Leadership Conference Aug. 2-4 in Dallas, TX.

The presentation groups will each have three presentors and a moderator. Topics will be "Re-Imagining God and Incarnation: Feminist, Womanist and Liberationist Perspectives," "Re-Imagining Church Growth: Views Through Different Lenses," and "Re-Imagining Power: Creating Relationships of Mutuality Toward a World that Works for All."

The Department of People of Colors' Conference on "Connecting, Celebrating and Communicating" will be Aug. 5-7 in Dallas. Look for the exciting ways that people of color from

(see Re-Imagine God, page 2)

International Attendance Expected

Lesbian and gay Christians from South Africa and the Philippines are expected to participate in the UFMCC Leadership and People of Colors' Conferences Aug. 2-7 in Dallas, TX.

Mr. Allan Verdadero and Mr. Manny Manago, both potential student clergy from MCC Manila in the Philippines, plan to attend.

(see International, page 3)

Samaritan/CTS Dual Program Starts

The Samaritan College Board of Trustees has approved the implementation of a dual enrollment program with Chicago Theological Seminary beginning in late 1994. Once the program receives approval from Chicago Theological Seminary faculty, MCC clergy candidates who attend Chicago Theological Seminary can enroll in a program that not only earns them a Master of Divinity degree, but will also earn a Certificate in Samaritan Studies which will meet their academic requirements for licensure in UFMCC.

The advantages of this program for MCC clergy candidates and other students pursuing theological education or who want to update their academics are:

- ▼ Opportunity for financial aid.
- ▼ Access to an outstanding theological library which includes the most up-to-date texts on human sexuality.
- ▼ Incentive to achieve additional education/training beyond the minimum required proficiencies.

Anyone who meets the standard admissions requirements for enrollment in CTS may also enroll in this program.

The advantages of this program for Samaritan are:

- ▼ Qualified Samaritan faculty will team-teach some curriculum with CTS faculty.
- ▼ Access to a theological library and increased credibility by association with Chicago Theological Seminary.
- ▼ Samaritan curriculum becomes more accessible to the larger lesbian/gay community and others interested in non-homophobic theological education.

This program was developed and detailed by the academic dean of Samaritan, Dr. Mona West, with the Education Policy Committee of the Samaritan Board of Trustees. Dr. West expects this program to become a model of joint education between Samaritan and other seminaries across the country. ❐

MCCs Stand For Justice

Two Metropolitan Community Churches are standing up for social justice in conservative California towns.

Members of MCC in the Country, Spring Valley, CA, attended an April 21 meeting when the Vista Unified School Board considered a sex education program called "Sex Respect." Rev. Yvette Dube, pastor, gave a rousing and informative speech opposing the program.

"The 'Sex Respect' paperwork in question intimates that honor and respoect do not apply in homosexual relationships. I contend that homosexuals are just as capable of lifelong relationships...I challenge you to be true to the title and teach respect for all sexual orientations," she said. Many parents, students and community members also spoke against the policy.

Mr. Todd Penland, member of Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert, Lancaster, CA is president of the Antelope Valley Gay and Lesbian Alliance, which is sponsoring the area's first gay and lesbian pride celebration this June. A new group called Alliance Against Immoral Conduct has formed to oppose the festival. The new group claims said it is not affiliated with Antelope Valley Springs of Life Ministries, the Lancaster church that became notorious for producing and distributing 100,000 copies of the homophobic video "The Gay Agenda" last year. Organizers expect 2,000 to 3,000 people to attend the festival. ❐

Australia Set for 1997 General Conference

Space at the Sydney Convention Centre at Darling Harbour has been confirmed as the primary convention site for General Conference July 20-27, 1997.

Rev. Elder Don Eastman and Mr. Ravi Verma, director of administration, were in Australia recently to make preliminary arrangements with the Sydney Convention Centre and various hotels for the 1997 General Conference. Rev. John Fowler, pastor of MCC Melbourne, will serve as on-site coordinator for the General Conference.

"The Sydney Convention Centre is one of the world's premiere conference sites," Mr. Verma said. "The facilities there will make our conference in Sydney one of the most memorable in the history of the Fellowship." ❐

Florida Church Will Build

Members of Church of Our Savior MCC, Boca Raton, FL, voted by 70% to build their new 351-seat sanctuary. "We need to raise $150,000 in cash and we need to sell $650,000 in bonds," Rev. John F. Jacobs, pastor, announced. "To complete our project, it is our prayer that sisters and brothers throughout our denomination will be eager to help. The expected rate on the bonds should be from 5 to 8% or better and should be offered in 45-60 days. Please keep us in your prayers," Rev. Jacobs concluded. ❐

Re-Imagine God

(continued from page 1)

South Africa and the Philippines will discuss issues regarding people of color in their countries. This conference will be especially beneficial for members of churches that are trying to recruit and train more people of color.

Additional events held in conjunction with the Leadership Conference include a pre-conference institute on "The Sexual Ethics of Church Leaders" on Aug. 1 and the 1994 Church Growth Conference for Pastors on July 31 and Aug. 1.

For more information, contact UFMCC, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Phone (213) 464-5100; Fax (213) 464-2123. ❐

Keeping in Touch is a monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We are a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation.

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Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Moderator
Mr. Ravi Verma, Director of Administration
Rev. Kittredge Cherry, Editor

Deadline for each issue: 15th of previous month.

Ms. Nancy Fackrell, Typesetting

Around The Fellowship

Praises

Ms. Iris Saggers, pastoral leader of **MCC Waikato** in Hamilton, New Zealand, will be the first woman licensed as UFMCC clergy in New Zealand. She was recommended for initial licensure by the Australian District Clergy Review Committee at the Australian District Conference. She will also be the first person to complete academic training as clergy through the Australian Samaritan Education Partnership with the Church Extension Area of Aotearoa/New Zealand.

MCC of the Quad Cities, Rock Island, IL, put a down payment on a new building. The church expects to move into its new home on June 1.

MCC Topeka, KS, paid off its mortgage early and will set a date for a mortgage-burning party soon.

MCC Bridgerland, Logan, UT, recently held a series of three joint worship services with the church's host congregation around the issue of homelessness, resulting in extensive newspaper coverage. Pastoral leader **Kelly Byrnes** is writing a series of short articles about the Bible and homosexuality for a community newspaper in Salt Lake City.

MCC Tulsa, OK, held a mortgage-burning ceremony in March. It was the first MCC to be financed through a bond issue. **Rev. Alice Jones** has been the pastor since 1978.

Many statistics about **UFMCC** are listed in ***Gay and Lesbian Stats*** by Bennett Singer and David Deschamps, published in June by the New Press, New York City, NY.

Prayers

Rev. David Teggert, New Zealand Area Coordinator, was hospitalized briefly for thrombosis in his legs.

Rev. Grant Brush, clergy on staff at **MCC of the Living Faith,** St. Louis, MO, was hospitalized for eye problems.

Rev. Ruby Grammer of the **Mid-Central District** underwent surgery in March for a hysterectomy.

Transitions

St. John the Apostle MCC voted to call **Rev. Renee Shawver** as pastor, effective May 17.

Rev. Susan Hilty accepted the position of minister of education and social action at **Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert,** Lancaster, CA. Rev. Hilty is transfer clergy from the American Baptist Church.

Rev. George Allen resigned recently as pastor of **Exodus MCC**, Abilene, TX.

Corrections

The March tithe of St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville, FL, was incorrectly reported in *Keeping in Touch*. The church's tithe was $3,509.08, which results in a ranking of second place on the "Top 20 Tithes" list and a first-place per capita tithe of $36.44.

Faith Eternal MCC, which ranked 14th on the "Top 20 Per Capita" list for March, is in Springfield, IL, not MO.

Rev. Ann Hulse is the new pastor, not interim pastor, at Angels Among Us MCC, Mt. Vernon, WA. She continues as co-pastor at Song of Messiah MCC, Bellingham, WA.

International

(continued from page 1)

Special fundraising efforts have raised nearly $6,000 toward the expenses of bringing South Africans, both black and white, to the conference.

Those expected to attend from South Africa include Rev. Andre Muller, pastor of the 200-member Reforming Church in Pretoria; Ms. Nomsa Khumalo of Soweto; and Rev. Daniel de Kock of Capetown. All are considering affiliation with UFMCC.

The possibility of a speaking tour by some or all of the South Africans is being explored. Anyone interested in making a donation or hosting them at their local MCC may contact Rev. Kit Cherry at UFMCC Headquarters. ❐

Top 20 Tithes - April 1994

1.	Sunshine Cathedral MCC, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	US$	3,348.89
2.	MCC Washington, Washington, DC		2,876.86
3.	St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville, FL		2,771.19
4.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX		2,694.16
5.	MCC Los Angeles, Culver City, CA		2,116.81
6.	MCC Toronto, Ontario, Canada	CAN $	2,103.00
7.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA		2,003.69
8.	MCC Austin, Austin, TX		1,841.03
9.	MCC San Francisco, San Francisco, CA		1,530.11
10.	Church of the Trinity MCC, Sarasota, FL		1,505.26
11.	MCC New Haven, New Haven, CT		1,390.81
12.	MCC of Greater Kansas City, Kansas City, MO		1,368.83
13.	MCC New York, New York City, NY		1,368.75
14.	MCC Key West, Key West, FL		1,270.67
15.	MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO		1,226.77
16.	Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston, TX		1,126.63
17.	River City MCC, Sacramento, CA		1,093.07
18.	First MCC of Atlanta, Atlanta, GA		937.32
19.	MCC Richmond, Richmond, VA		901.38
20.	Church of Our Savior MCC, Boca Raton, FL		850.81

{These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's monthly income that is reported to fellowship headquarters.}

Top 20 Per Capita - April 1994

1.	Maranatha Fellowship MCC, Houston, TX	US$	57.78
2.	MCC Hartford, Hartford, CT		45.91
3.	MCC Ocean of Life, Costa Mesa, CA		42.91
4.	MCC New Haven, New Haven, CT		35.94
5.	Christ Chapel MCC, Santa Ana, CA		29.83
6.	Oasis MCC, Phoenix, AZ		26.77
7.	MCC Los Angeles, Culver City, CA		26.73
8.	Holy Cross MCC, Pensacola, FL		23.52
9.	Holy Covenant MCC, Hinsdale, IL		22.57
10.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA		22.34
11.	St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville, FL		21.23
12.	Church of the Holy Spirit MCC, Des Moines, IA		21.15
13.	Christos MCC, Toronto, Ontario, Canada	CAN$	20.62
14.	MCC Ottawa, Ontario, Canada	CAN$	19.91
15.	MCC of Northern Virginia, Falls Church, VA		19.54
16.	MCC Johnson County, Lenexa, KS		19.06
17.	Christ the Liberator MCC, New Brunswick, NJ		18.65
18.	Spirit Song MCC, Little Rock, AR		18.53
19.	Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY		17.88
20.	MCC Key West, Key West, FL		17.70

{These figures reflect average individual weekly offerings to the local church.}

District Conference News

Ms. Judy Dale was re-elected as Great Lakes District Coordinator at the recent district conference in Columbus, OH.

Ms. Dale was first elected Great Lakes District Coordinator in 1990. A 1969 graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ms. Dale and her spouse, Rev. Dee Dale, live in Louisville, KY.

Rev. Elder Don Eastman attended the recent Australian District Conference while making arrangements for the 1997 General Conference in Australia. "The churches in Australia are doing well," Rev. Eastman said. "MCC Sydney has a very strong and visible ministry under the leadership of Rev. Greg Smith, MCC Melbourne is growing and had a record 108 in Sunday worship during the district conference, MCC Brisbane has leased an impressive church building, and attendance in Adelaide is the highest ever."

Many other districts held successful conferences recently, including the Mid-Atlantic, South Central and Southwest Districts. ❐

MCC Plays Active Role in North Carolina Council

Private donations to the North Carolina Council of Churches have more than made up for the funds lost when the council voted UFMCC into membership last year.

"It's been a phenomenal experience," said Rev. Christine Oscar, who was elected recently as one of three delegates representing UFMCC's Gulf Lower Atlantic District on the executive board of the North Carolina Council. The others are Revs. Wayne Lindsey and Nancy Brown.

The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church cut about $24,000 from the amount expected by the church council in 1993-94. "The council is being rescued, however, and better than rescued, by special contributions from individuals, and to some degree by congregations," said Rev. Collins Kilburn, executive director of the council.

Private donations rose from $20,000 in 1992 to $36,000 in 1993, and $50,000 is anticipated for 1994, he said.

"If it can be done in North Carolina, it can be done anywhere," Rev. Oscar concluded. ❐

God-Box

(continued from page 1)

Demonstrators, linked by a "rainbow rope," will fall into silent prayer once the building has been completely encircled. (Entrances will not be blocked). After the formal protest ends at 1:00 p.m., smaller groups of demonstrators will attempt to meet with representatives of church-affiliated agencies housed in the building to express their demand for justice.

Besides the UFMCC, the "Hands Around the God-Box" demonstration's co-sponsors include American Baptists Concerned for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People; Axios: Eastern & Orthodox Christian Gay Men and Women; Brethren/Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns; CLOUT (Christian Lesbians OUT Together); Conference for Catholic Lesbians; Dignity/USA (Roman Catholic); Interweave (Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian/Bi/Gay/Transgender Concerns); Integrity (Episcopalian); Lutherans Concerned/North America; Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns; United Church Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns; Unity Fellowship National Movement; and WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual). ❐

Classifieds

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Cost is $15 for the first 25 words or less. Additional words are 70 cents per word. Numbers and abbreviations count as words. All classifieds must be prepaid in U.S. funds. All copy for Keeping in Touch Classified Advertising is subject to the approval of the Editorial Board. Appearance of advertising does not imply, nor does it constitute, endorsement by UFMCC. Mail ads to: Keeping in Touch Classifieds, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029.

BOOKS & PUBLICATIONS

UFMCC Church Services is offering resources for small groups! They are available now. New titles include, "Words of Hope in the Midst of HIV/AIDS," "Christian Social Action: The Biblical Call to Work for Justice," "Encounters with God: Exploring Luke's Infancy Parratives." Check out these booklets for use in group discussions of 4 to 6 sessions. Available now thru Church Services, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; phone (213) 464-5100; Fax (213) 464-2123.

AIRLINE CAREERS! Live your dreams! Every important contact name, private phone, helpful fact you need. $10.95. FHA Airline Resources, POB 15611, Ft. Worth, TX 76155.

ALTERNATIVE INVESTOR - Informative, profitable investment newsletter. Ten percent of subscription fees are donated to organizations fighting for our rights. For more information and FREE copy of the latest issue, write: 3712 North Broadway #169, Chicago, Illinois 60613; or call (312) 935-7841.

THE FAMILY NEXT DOOR, a national newsletter for lesbian and gay parents includes information about education, health, family planning, social and legal issues, and more. P.O. Box 21580, Oakland, CA 94620.

MAIL ORDER

For a FREE UFMCC Church Services Catalog: please write or call 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; phone (213) 464-5100; Fax (213) 464-2123.

MERCHANDISE

Sunrise MCC of the Hi Desert, Lancaster, CA is in need of chairs for their sanctuary. If you have chairs for sale or would like to donate them, please call (805) 942-7076. In good condition a must!

ORGANIZATIONS

Gay & Lesbian Square Dancing. Fun! Friends! Info on Clubs in your area or help starting new one. International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs, P.O. Box 15428, Crystal City, VA 22215-0428. (800) 835-6462.

A network is forming for people who run community thrift stores at local MCCs. For information, contact Les Beu, MCC Toronto, 115 Simpson Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4K-1A1.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Dynamic Congregation seeks half-time UFMCC-Licensed Pastor. For application contact: River of Life MCC, P.O. Box 1678, Richland, WA 99352 by 31 August '94.

MCC Albuquerque seeks F/T Pastor with MCC pastoring experience. Qualified persons send for applications c/o Pastoral Search Committee, c/o MCCAbq., P.O. Box 35808, Albuquerque, NM 87176-5808 NLT 7/15/94.

New Life MCC seeking part-time Pastor whose calling and faith will shepherd us to support a full-time position, development and expansion of our ministries in Tidewater, VA. Must be licensed or in the final stages of UFMCC licensure; prefer bachelor's degree, with three years minimum experience as UFMCC clergy/student clergy. To obtain expanded information please send resume to P.O. Box 1026, Norfolk, VA 23501.

MCC congregation is searching for a pastoral leader. Are you Adventurous? Energetic? Wanting the good life in the Ozarks? Contact MCC of the Living Spring, P.O. Box 365, Eureka Springs, AR 72632. (501) 253-9337.

POSITIONS WANTED

Recovering Baptist music minister seeks staff position. MDiv, CPE residency, liturgically aware, variously gifted. Clay Ollis, 540-3 Glendalyn Ave., Spartanburg, SC 29302; (803) 948-1001.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Houts Investigations, Box 122058, Arlington, TX 76012. (817) 265-1354. (Fax) (817) 860-7379. Serving the needs of churches, attorneys, and individuals after consultation and case review. References available.